



## Patch on the Planet

### Stop and chat sheet for Summer - June

#### Brief background

This is a patch on the planet I visit regularly and feature in my blogs about walking with nature. It is in the western Pennine region in the North of England on the edge of a small town.

The Patch was once the pleasure grounds to a Victorian house that is no longer there. This explains why there is a large variety of trees and bushes and plants like the snowdrop and daffodil which were not part of the original flora of England but brought into the country from Europe centuries ago. The patch has been overgrown for many years and there is now a management programme in operation to increase its biodiversity. This accounts for the wood piles seen around the grounds.

#### How to use this sheet

Start the video and stop it at the times indicated for a brief chat from me about what you are seeing.

#### Away you go

[Note: at **2.13** there is an extra 's' in 'insects' in the caption]

**0.13** Our investigation begins with the soil with the aim of finding out what invertebrates live there. Out of the backpack we have taken a white enamel tray and a trowel.

**0.24** I have used the trowel to dig out some soil, about enough to cover half the tray. The white background of the tray makes it easier to see any mini-beasts that might be moving about.

**0.35** We are recording what we find by taking a photograph with the tablet, but you can also use the camera on your phone.

**0.48** The next step is to record the plants that are growing in open soil. To help focus us on this task, we set up a quadrat to nature square and photograph all the plants inside it for our records.

**0.56** A magnifying glass is essential in the backpack, and we use ones which have lights on them to show up the mini-beasts more clearly.

**1.28** To find out more about the mini-beasts on the branches, we have placed a white towel under a branch. Any mini-beasts that fall out of the branch are much easier to see on the white towel.

**1.41** As always, we record what we find by taking photographs on the tablet. These can be compared with pictures in books or on the internet later for identification.

**2.20** After investigating mini-beasts on branches, a sweep net can be used to investigate mini-beasts living in the grass and taller plants which make up the herb layer of our patch. It is important to keep the legs and feet covered when venturing into this layer as there is a chance that some mini-beasts may be present that can cause disease if they get access to your skin.

**2.28** In our brief survey, we are finishing off by looking at the larger plants on the patch. Here you can see the herb layer represented by brambles, with a few plants growing through them to form the shrub layer and above them the tree or canopy layer where we can see a horse chestnut is displaying its growing fruits, which are commonly known as conkers.

**2.44** Flower heads like these form landing pads for many insects who come to feed on the nectar. You can record them simply by standing by the plants quietly, waiting until the insects land, then slowly moving your phone or tablet nearer and taking a picture.

**3.16** The patch receives quite a lot of rain over the year and could perhaps be described as being in a temperate rainforest zone as its trees have algae, moss and lots of lichens growing on them. Look at the trees around you and see what else may be living on their bark.